

Press Release

Lateral West Fire



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2373

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Fire, Hurricanes, and Earthquakes? – story by Deloras Freeman

Suffolk, Virginia The Southern Area Type 2 Incident team had just sat down for a Hurricane



Contingency Planning meeting when the floor began to move. An earthquake had just become the latest incident for the group, which was called in to help Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and the Dismal Swamp State Park put out the 6,000 acre Lateral West Fire. After a quick reality check to verify everyone was OK, the group again focused on the many decision to be made.

The number one objective of any Incident is for the safety of work crews and the public. During the planning meeting, Incident Commander Mike Dueitt stated “we will leave pumps running on the fire as long as we can, but we will not cut ourselves short on time to get our equipment and folks out safely for the hurricane.”

With one eye on the Hurricane and another on the fire, decisions are hinged to the track of Hurricane Irene. Preparations include moving equipment to staging areas, securing work trailers, emptying dumpsters, stocking food rations and water, making arrangements for those that need to leave town, and compiling contact list for those who stay.

The current expected landfall for Irene is just west of Hatteras, NC, with the storm passing over the refuge early Sunday morning bringing beneficial rains to the fire area. Tim Craig, Fire Management Officer for the refuge cautioned the group, “Eight inches of rain will not put the

fire out but it will buy us time to clear our way through the downed trees back to the fire zone after the storm.”

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Photo caption. All credit: Catherine J. Hibbard/USFWS

Incident meteorologist Scott Kennedy briefs the Southern Area Type 2 Incident Management Team on the path of Hurricane Irene.